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jointing on the Table Saw

Getting a clean, straight edge without a jointer is easier than you think.

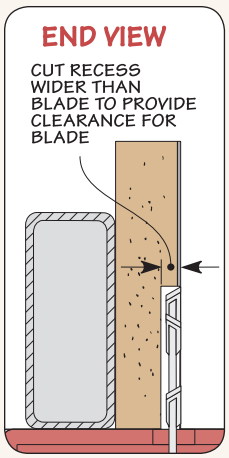
Most woodworking tasks, like gluing up a panel, depend on edges that are straight, smooth, and square. The first tool you think of is a jointer. But if you don't have one, it doesn't mean you need to settle for less than perfect cuts. You can turn to your table saw.

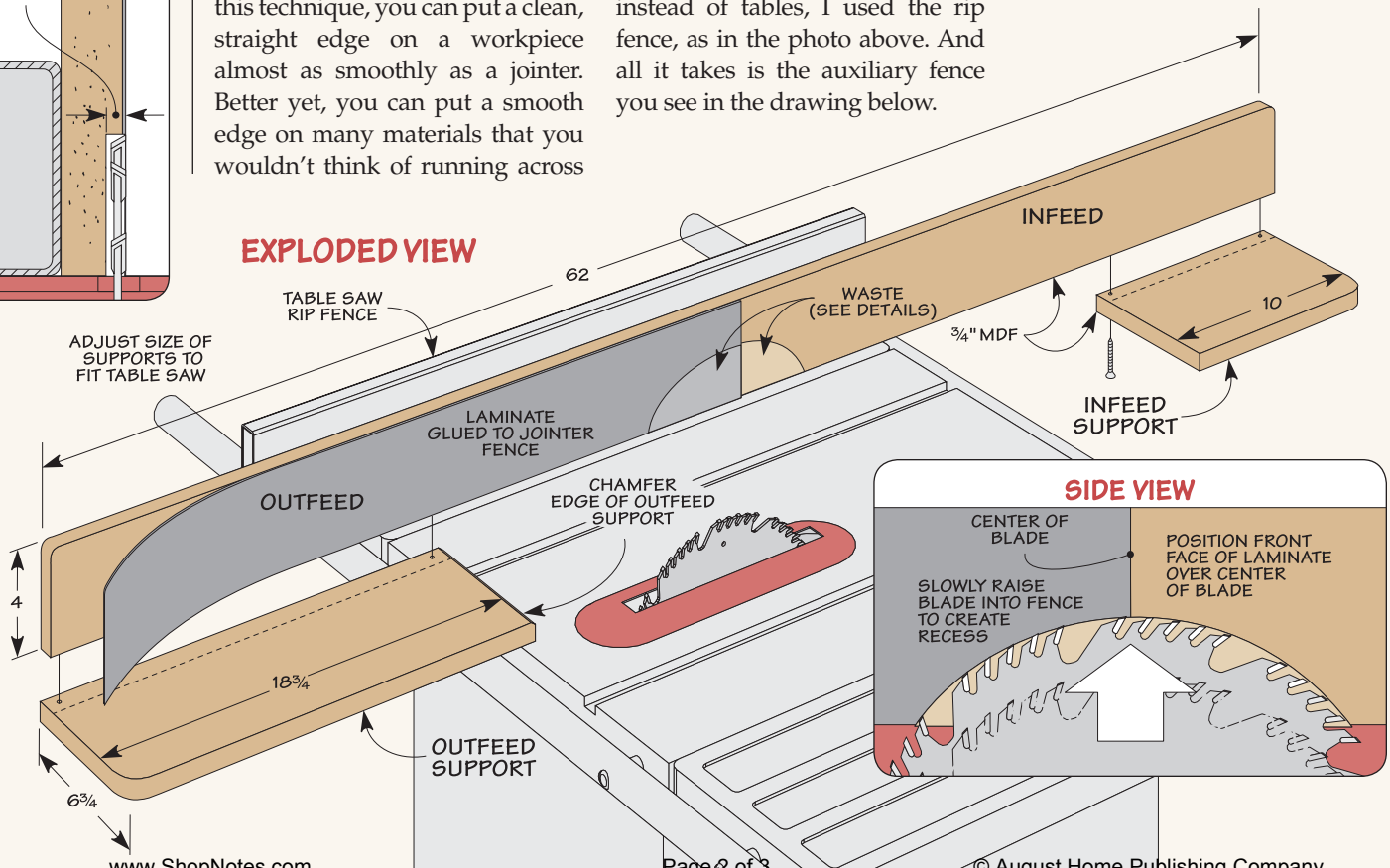
Jointing on a table saw? I know it sounds hard to believe. But with this technique, you can put a clean, straight edge on a workpiece almost as smoothly as a jointer. Better yet, you can put a smooth edge on many materials that you wouldn't think of running across your jointer, such as plywood, MDF, and particleboard.

How It Works. The key to using your table saw like a jointer is duplicating the offset of a jointer's infeed and outfeed tables. But instead of tables, I used the rip fence, as in the photo above. And all it takes is the auxiliary fence you see in the drawing below.

MAKING THE FENCE

The auxiliary fence is basically a long fence face that gets clamped to the existing rip fence. The long face (I used MDF) is about twice as long as my rip fence. The extra length





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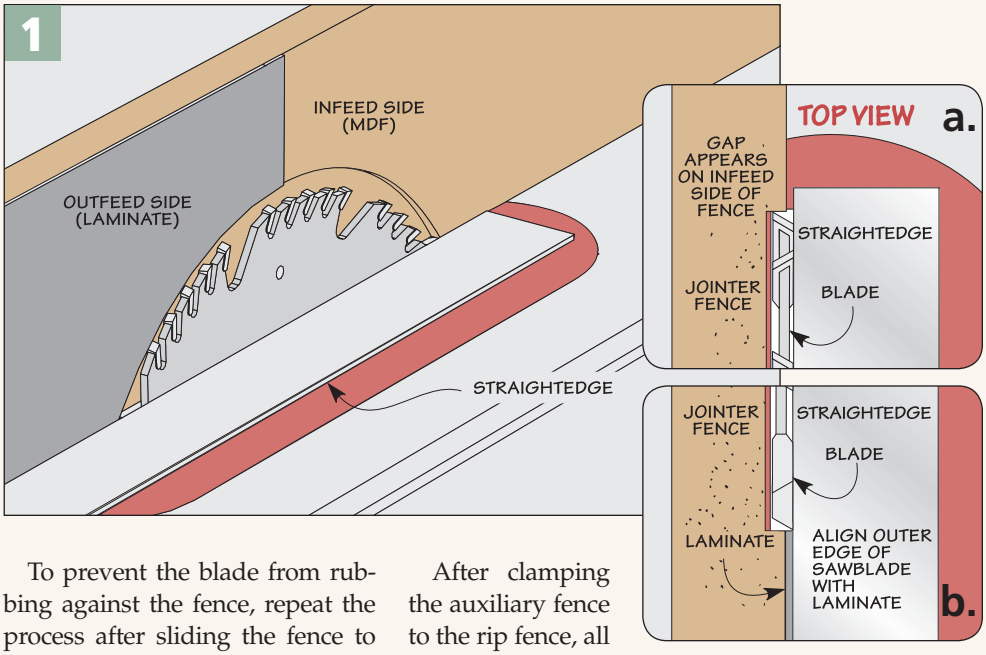
provides a nice, long reference edge and makes it easy to put a straight edge on a long workpiece.

Laminate Face. On the rear portion of the fence, I applied a piece of plastic laminate. This is what creates a slight offset so you can remove a thin shaving from the edge of the workpiece. (The drawing on the previous page shows you where to locate it.) The laminate supports the workpiece after it passes across the blade.

Blade Recess. Since the laminate is thinner than the blade, you'll need to create a recess in the fence. This allows the blade to be set flush with the outfeed side, as you can see in the Side View on the bottom of the previous page.

Creating the recess is a two-step process. First, lower the saw blade and position the auxiliary fence over it. The outside face of the blade should be flush with or extend slightly outside the edge of the auxiliary fence.

Second, you can turn on the saw and slowly raise the blade up into the auxiliary fence (about 2"). This lets you joint wood up to 1½" thick.



To prevent the blade from rubbing against the fence, repeat the process after sliding the fence to the left a little (see End View on the previous page).

Auxiliary Supports. Finally, I attached a support to each end of the fence. They simply "extend" the top of the table saw to support long workpieces during a cut.

SETTING UP

With the fence built, you'll find that setting it up on your saw takes just a minute or so. You can see how this is done in Figure 1.

After clamping the auxiliary fence to the rip fence, all you really have to do is align the outfeed side flush with the blade.

To do this, place a straightedge along the face of the laminate. Adjust the fence so the straightedge just touches the outside edges of the blade's teeth, as you can see in Figures 1a and 1b.

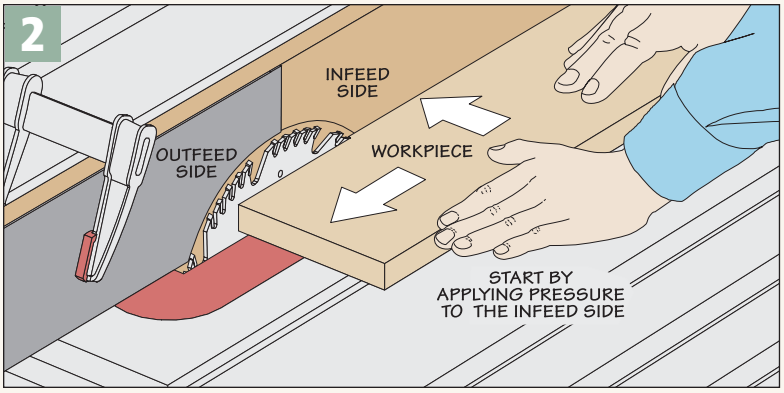
USING THE FENCE

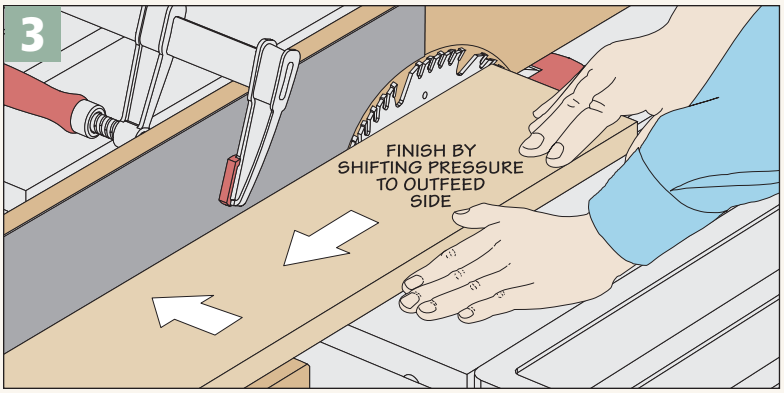
Jointing an edge on the table saw with the fence is a little different than normal cutting. That's because the fence and blade are on the same side of the workpiece.

Starting the Cut. At the beginning, you want to concentrate on moving the workpiece forward steadily while applying firm pressure against the infeed side of the fence. You can see how this is done in Figure 2. I like to begin with both hands on the infeed side of the fence. I keep my left hand stationary near the blade and use my right hand to feed the stock.

Completing the Cut. As the workpiece passes the blade, I move my left hand forward to hold the stock firmly against the *outfeed* side of the fence, while my right hand continues to feed the stock in a steady motion (Figure 3). This prevents the workpiece from pivoting in toward the blade.

Now, you're on your way to getting perfectly smooth edges. It's the best way to get your projects off on the right start.





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